

Raccoon Roundworms & Your Health

Raccoons live in both country and city settings, and may carry diseases, such as *Baylisascaris procyonis*, an intestinal roundworm, without becoming sick. This parasite can infect humans and animals (such as dogs) when they come in contact with raccoon feces and latrines (areas where raccoons regularly defecate). Raccoon latrines are commonly found on rooftops, tree stumps, and wood piles.



Watch children closely while playing outside and teach them not to put dirt in their mouths.

Disease Highlights:

- **Transmission:** People get infected by accidentally eating roundworm eggs in soil, water, or on objects that have been contaminated with raccoon feces.
- **Risk to Humans:** Human disease is rare (fewer than 25 total cases reported in the US). People at highest risk of disease include those who put dirt in their mouth (such as children 1 to 4 years of age). People whose hobbies or occupations make them more likely to come in direct contact with raccoon feces (such as hunters, campers, and gardeners) are also at higher risk.
- **Signs in Humans:** Signs vary depending on the number of eggs eaten and can include nausea, stomach pain, loss of coordination, and blindness.

Recommendations for preventing illness:

Teach children not to put dirt or other objects in their mouth while playing outside. □ Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after handling animals and playing outside. ☐ Regularly inspect outdoor areas where children play for raccoon feces and latrines. ☐ If you find feces or a latrine, follow these clean-up steps: 1. Wear disposable gloves, rubber boots, and mask (if in a confined space). After clean-up is complete, scrub your boots and wash all your clothing in hot water and bleach. 2. Double bag all feces and contaminated materials. Put the bags in your regular trash container for disposal. Waste can also be incinerated. 3. Disinfect contaminated surfaces with boiling water. Remove and discard the top three inches of soil in the contaminated areas. 4. Check your vard for new latrines at least once a week; this is especially important if you frequently see raccoons in your yard. Clean up all latrines promptly to reduce the risk of contamination. Discourage raccoons from living near your home by tightly closing your garbage cans, covering sandboxes, sealing attics, and not leaving pet food outside. You can also discourage raccoons by placing cayenne pepper, rags soaked in ammonia, or electric fencing around your yard. □ Pets can also become infected with raccoon roundworms. Prevent infection by keeping your pets away from latrines, and taking them to your veterinarian for regular deworming. If your dog is diagnosed with raccoon roundworms, notify your health care provider. ☐ If you think you or your child accidently ate raccoon feces, call your health care provider to

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CFSPH Animal Disease Information at www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/fastfacts.php
CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People at www.cdc.gov/healthypets/
Last Updated: July 20 PC EID Article at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/Eid/vol9no12/pdfs/03-0039.pdf

discuss your potential exposure. You may need medications to prevent becoming ill.